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Report of a Committee of the Statistical Society of London, on the State of the Working Classes in the Parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster.

[Read at an Ordinary Meeting of the Society, March 16th, 1840.]

IN presenting the following Report to the Statistical Society of London, the Committee, who have conducted the inquiry, are desirous of stating that it has been their object to investigate the condition of the whole of the families of the working classes resident within the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster.

Having prepared a series of questions relating to the physical and moral condition of the working classes, the Committee appointed two agents, in whose integrity and diligence they could rely, and confided to them the duty of obtaining answers to their queries, by a personal inspection of the dwellings of the working classes, and by conversation with the members of the families of the working population, whom they might find at home during their visits. Both the agents visited the dwellings of the working classes together, and they thus became mutually a check on the accuracy of the statistical information obtained. For a short time a third agent was engaged by the Committee to assist in the investigation, by visiting alone, but at the end of a few weeks he relinquished his employment, and the whole of the work of the inquiry was subsequently conducted by the two agents who had been originally appointed.

Many of the houses in the district visited were subdivided into single rooms, and each room contained frequently a separate family; the street door leading to the interior apartments was usually closed, and the agents were often obliged to knock or ring in order to obtain admission into the house; they afterwards visited the various families within the house in their separate apartments.

Nearly two-fifths of the houses in the district examined were inhabited by the families of the working classes, and were therefore included within the objects of the inquiry.

During their visits to these houses the agents met with almost constant courtesy from the members of the families visited, who were in many instances the wives or mothers of workmen employed in the neighbourhood. There were 16,176 persons included within the inquiry, and 1·71 per cent., or less than one-fiftieth part of this number were found to be confined to their rooms by sickness. According to the census of 1831, the total population of the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster, amounted, at that period, to 47,922 inhabitants.

Lodgers of the working classes, in the two parishes visited, usually rented unfurnished rooms, and they afterwards provided themselves with beds, chairs, and other household furniture. A security for the punctual payment of the rent was thus afforded to the landlords, in the value of the furniture purchased by the tenants.

Whole families were often congregated together in rooms of small dimensions, and the ventilation of the rooms was, in many cases, very imperfect. No instance occurred of more than one family residing in the same room. Rooms were considered to be well furnished when they contained a bed, several chairs, a piece of matting, a table, a clock, and a

cupboard or a chest of drawers; scantily furnished rooms contained a bed, two chairs, a chest of drawers, and a table; ill furnished rooms contained only a bed, one chair, and a table, and sometimes one or other even of these essential articles of furniture was wanting. Two-fifths of the dwellings visited were, according to these definitions, well furnished; two-fifths were scantily furnished, and one-seventh were ill furnished, or, in some instances, nearly destitute.

At the commencement of the inquiry the number of beds was observed in a portion of the parish of St. Margaret, including Orchard-street and Tothill-street, in which streets many poor families reside. For 275 families visited in this locality, it was found that there were 389 beds provided; the total number of the members of the 275 families consisted of the following individuals:—

221 adult males,
257 adult females,
14 aged males,
20 aged females,
287 male children,
313 female children,

Total, 1112 persons; affording thus an average of nearly three
— persons, of both sexes, and of all ages, to each
bed.

Pictures were commonly seen in the dwellings visited, but the number of theatrical or amatory pictures exceeded the number on serious subjects.

The most popular literature which was read in the families of the working classes visited, consisted of the cheap periodical publications of the day; and the most adventurous, and unfortunately often the most licentious of these economical papers, were more attractive than the serious and really useful works of the periodical press. Serious books, however, slightly preponderated in number over the theatrical or amatory books.

More than half of the total number of children were reported to be in attendance at school. Dame schools were included with day schools, Sunday schools, and infant schools, in the places of education for the children, and a majority of the children were stated to be in the receipt of gratuitous education, which large number is probably owing to the existence of several free schools in the district visited, and to the Sunday schools.

The number of the members of the Church of England among the families of the working classes visited was slightly greater than the collective number of the Roman Catholics and Dissenters. Nearly one-fifth of the principal members of the families of the working population visited, professed not to belong to any religious denomination whatever. About two-fifths of the principal members of the labouring families visited stated that they attended public worship, and nearly the same number stated that they did not attend public worship.

Many of the working men were employed as labourers during the week, or they were engaged in the numerous manufacturing establishments which are met with in the metropolis. The women were generally not employed from home; nearly two-fifths were, however, in work, and were occupied in washing, domestic service, or needlework, or as hawkers.

Families of the working classes usually preferred living in their own separate rooms, for the sake of economy; but there were a few cases in which several individuals, not belonging to the same family, were collected together in the same room.

One lodging-house in Orchard-street, in the parish of St. Margaret, was divided into rooms for nightly lodgers, as well as for families. Six rooms were set apart in this house for the nightly lodgers, and each room was furnished with four beds, thus affording accommodation for 24 lodgers, at 3*d.* per night for each bed. Some of the inmates were, however, too poor to pay even so small a sum as 3*d.* for their bed, and the same bed was, in consequence, occasionally shared by several occupants. The beds were of straw, with threadbare and ragged coverings, and each room was only provided with a couple of chairs. Five rooms in the same house were in the possession of weekly tenants; two of these rooms were rented by one family, at the rate of six shillings per week, and each of the remaining lodging-rooms was occupied by a separate family, at the rent of 3*s.* 6*d.* per week. If the beds were regularly occupied, and paid for, and the weekly rents of the other rooms were punctually paid, the income arising from the sub-division of this house would be thus received:—

	£.	s.	d.
24 beds, at 3 <i>d.</i> per night, for one year	109	10	0
2 rooms, at a weekly rent of 6 <i>s.</i>	15	12	0
3 rooms, at 3 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> each, or 10 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> for the 3 rooms, per week. .	27	6	0
	<hr/>		
	£152	8	0
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The yearly rent paid by the landlord for the house, including the taxes, was stated to be	60	0	0
	<hr/>		
Difference	£92	8	0
	<hr/>		

There can be little doubt but that the profits arising from such a sub-division of household property must be very considerable.

On the ground floor of this lodging-house there is an eating-room, in which the lodgers frequently take their meals. Twenty-four individuals, including eighteen males and six females, were observed at the same time in this room, which was not more than twenty feet square. A couple of benches, about half a dozen chairs, and a table, were placed in the eating-room, for the benefit of the lodgers; some of the men were smoking and drinking, and others were engaged either in preparing or in eagerly devouring their breakfast, amidst much noise and confusion.

A large tract of ground, on the eastern side of the Bridewell, in the parish of St. Margaret, Westminster, still remains undrained, and is liable alike to floods in winter, and to the hurtful exhalations of its stagnant waters in summer. Several rows of cottages have been built in different directions, and without uniformity, across this territory, and the general name of Palmer's Village is given to the locality, from a tradition of its ancient inhabitants. Rents are usually low in this vicinity, and no rents are paid for many of the cottages. The neighbours state, that six or eight of these cottages, opposite to Paradise-row, in Palmer's Village, were formerly in the possession of a Mr. Andrew Mann, and that some years ago they were the subject of a law-suit, which was decided against Mann. Instructions were then given, by the agent of

the opposite party, to the tenants, not to pay any rent until they were called upon again for that purpose, which has not yet been done. Since the decision of the law-suit, no change of tenants has occurred, and one house, which became empty, was immediately locked up, as it now remains; it is in a most dilapidated condition, with the windows and roof in holes.

Most of the cottages in Palmer's Village are small, containing only two rooms each, the dimensions of which do not average more than eight feet square. Only one family is contained in each cottage. The windows in some of the cottages are mended with paper and other thrifty substitutes for glass. Although these habitations are evidently in want of repair, and may even be dangerous, from their time-shaken and tottering condition during the period of storms, the inmates are attached to them, as they are thus enabled to escape from the exactions of extravagant rents.

The analysis of the number of the dwellings of the working classes, in the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster, presents the following results:—

3,852	single rooms for each family.
1,053	sets of two rooms for each family.
156	sets of three rooms for each family.
52	sets of four rooms for each family.

Total, 5,113 dwellings of families visited.

If the dwellings of the nightly lodgers be also included, there will be about 5,294 dwellings in the district visited, in the greater part of which the sum paid as rent was carefully ascertained from the inmates.

The average amount of weekly rent paid on these 5,294 dwellings amounts to 2s. 11½d., and more than three-quarters of the dwellings are only single rooms.

Some idea of the expensive terms on which labouring families are generally compelled to rent their small and inconvenient dwellings in the district visited may be derived from a comparison of the dwellings of the working classes in Manchester, as they are classified in the published tables of the Manchester Statistical Society.

According to the analysis of the dwellings of the working classes visited by the agents of that society, there are in Manchester—

21,453	houses, inhabited by the working population.
3,162	single rooms.
3,571	cellars.

Total, 28,186 dwellings, of which three-quarters are whole houses or cottages, not limited to single rooms.

The average weekly rent of these dwellings is 2s. 11½d.

The exorbitant rates which were often charged for the lodgings of the working population in Westminster constituted the source of numerous and bitter complaints which were made to the agents of the Committee during their visits to the dwellings of the poor; and the amelioration of their condition can hardly be anticipated, while they are obliged to pay very high rents.

It is not, however, meant, by any remark which may be made in this

Report, to attach blame to the parties by whom the rents are received. These parties only seek for that gain which every one who embarks his property in a business considers to be his due; and the extent of their profits is of course limited by the same law which limits and regulates profits generally,—the law of demand and supply.

High rents are an evil of a practical nature, from which the labouring classes in Westminster are severely suffering; and a sufficient proof of this circumstance is afforded in the fact, that large numbers of the families of the working population continue to reside, for months and years together, crowded within miserable dwellings, consisting of single rooms, of very moderate size, for each family.

As a remedy for such an obvious grievance, the Committee are desirous to show the advantage which may be derived from the outlay of a moderate amount of capital in the erection of buildings, containing sets of rooms suited to the accommodation of labouring families, in properly selected situations. For these dwellings weekly rents should be required from the tenants, and a profit may in this manner be reasonably expected from capital judiciously invested, while advantages of still greater importance, both physical and moral, would be gained to society, from the removal of a serious cause of discontent among the working classes, and from the provision of a more correct and convenient arrangement of their household comforts, which may materially assist in the foundation of a superior moral character for the working population of the city of Westminster.

TABLE 1.—Population and State of Health of the Families of the Working Classes in the Parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Number of families visited	2,110	3,256	5,366
Male children . . . {Well	1,438	1,893	3,331
{Ill	27	41	68
Female children . . . {Well	1,173	1,552	2,725
{Ill	18	21	39
Total	2,656	3,507	6,163
Adult males {Well	1,757	3,066	4,823
{Ill	16	59	75
Adult females . . . {Well	1,964	2,798	4,762
{Ill	8	68	76
Aged and infirm males {Well	31	90	121
{Ill	3	9	12
Aged and infirm females {Well	28	109	137
{Ill . . . . .	..	7	7
Total	3,807	6,206	10,013
Number of children . . .	2,656	3,507	6,163
Total population	6,463	9,713	16,176
Total ill	72	205	277
Number of children vaccinated	1,742	1,972	3,714
" not vaccinated . . .	914	1,535	2,449

TABLE 2.—Occupation of the Principal Members of the Families.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Men employed in building trades . . .	144	287	431
„ clothing trades . . .	236	167	403
„ as labourers . . .	473	1,245	1,718
Occupations not classified . . .	803	1,080	1,883
Not employed . . .	79	34	113
Not ascertained . . .	72	411	483
Total . . .	1,807	3,224	5,031
Women employed in domestic service .	391	538	929
„ needlework . . .	207	213	420
„ hawkers . . .	80	184	264
Not employed . . .	1,322	2,047	3,369
Total . . .	2,000	2,982	4,982

TABLE 3.—Country of the Principal Members of the Families.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
London . . .	653	777	1,430
Other parts of England . . .	1,155	1,469	2,624
Ireland . . .	99	499	598
Scotland . . .	59	133	192
Wales . . .	16	90	106
Foreign countries . . .	2	20	22
Not ascertained . . .	126	268	394
Total . . .	2,110	3,256	5,366

TABLE 4.—Religion professed by the Principal Members of the Families.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Members of families professing—			
To be members of the Church of			
England . . .	769	1,068	1,837
„ Roman Catholics . . .	95	486	581
„ Methodists . . .	106	135	242
„ members of other religious			
denominations . . .	438	505	943
Not to belong to any religious deno-			
mination . . .	541	640	1,181
Number not ascertained . . .	161	421	582
Total . . .	2,110	3,256	5,366
Number of the members of families who			
state that they—			
Attend public worship . . .	956	1,333	2,289
Do not attend public worship . .	912	1,165	2,077
Not ascertained . . .	242	758	1,000
Total . . .	2,110	3,256	5,366

TABLE 5.—Attendance of the Children of the Working Classes at Schools.

	St. Margaret.			St. John.			Total.
	Males	Fem.	Total.	Males	Fem.	Total.	
Number of children attending—							
Dame and day-schools . . .	464	469	933	513	409	922	1,855
Sunday schools	261	262	523	267	321	588	1,111
Infant schools	179	239	418	158	160	318	736
Number attending school . . .	904	970	1,874	938	890	1,828	3,702
Number of children not attending school—							
Males	561	..	..	996	..	..	1,557
Females . . . . .	..	221	..	..	683	..	904
Number not attending school . .	..	..	782	..	..	1,679	2,461
Total . . . . .	..	..	2,656	..	..	3,507	6,163

TABLE 6.—Payments of the Children of the Working Classes attending School.

Rate of Weekly Payment.	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
1d. and not exceeding . . . 3d. . .	404	385	789
Exceeding 3d. and not exceeding 6d. . .	357	295	652
" 6d. " 9d. . .	28	15	43
" 9d. " 1s. 0d. . .	34	17	51
" 1s. 0d. " 1s. 3d. . .	4	4	8
" 1s. 3d. " 1s. 6d. . .	..	4	4
" 1s. 6d. " 2s. 0d. . .	..	2	2
Total	827	722	1,549
Not paying any sum for schooling . .	1,047	1,106	2,153
Total	1,874	1,828	3,702

TABLE 7.—General Account of Books found in the Dwellings of the Working Classes.

Description.	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
Serious	275	387	662
Theatrical and Amatory	267	337	604
Miscellaneous	840	1,077	1,917
Rooms without any	679	1,251	1,930
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 8.—General Account of Pictures found in the Dwellings of the Working Classes.

Description.	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
Serious	171	166	337
Theatrical and Amatory	562	353	925
Miscellaneous	1,021	1,890	2,911
Rooms without any	307	633	940
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 9.—Rents paid by the Working Classes for their Dwellings.

	No. of Families.			Annual Amount of Rent.		
	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
Paying a weekly rent of 1s. and under	2	68	70	£. 4	133	137
Do. exceeding 1s. and not exceeding 1s. 6d. }	14	89	103	45	289	334
,, 1s. 6d. ,, 2 0	113	336	449	504	1,529	2,033
,, 2 0 ,, 2 6	591	703	1,294	3,457	4,113	7,570
,, 2 6 ,, 3 0	213	479	692	1,523	3,425	4,948
,, 3 0 ,, 3 6	399	290	689	3,890	2,450	6,340
,, 3 6 ,, 4 0	97	205	302	946	1,999	2,945
,, 4 0 ,, 4 6	130	217	347	1,436	2,398	3,834
,, 4 6 ,, 5 0	41	166	207	506	2,050	2,556
,, 5 0 ,, 5 6	67	95	162	915	1,297	2,212
,, 5 6 ,, 6 0	9	45	54	135	673	808
,, 6 0 ,, 6 6	42	47	89	697	764	1,461
,, 6 6 ,, 7 0	..	12	12	..	211	211
,, 8 0 ,, 8 6	1	35	36	21	751	772
Nightly lodgers at 3d. per night .	..	126	126	..	575	575
,, ,, 4d. ,,	..	109	109	..	663	663
Rent not ascertained	319	234	553	1,866	1,369	3,235
Paying no rent, Palmer's village .	72	..	72	..	..	..
Total	2,110	3,256	5,366	15,935	24,689	40,624
2,038 Dwellings in St. Margaret's, at an average weekly rent of 3s., give annually }				£15,896		
3,256 ,, St. John's, ,, 2s. 11d. ,, . . .					£24,684	
5,294 ,,, 2s. 11½d. ,,						£40,432

In estimating the annual amount of rent, an average weekly rent of 9d. has been taken for the first line; 1s. 3d. for the second; 1s. 9d. for the third, and so on; an addition of 6d. being made at every step. These rates form a mean between the two extremes. Where the rent has not been ascertained, the average of the rest has been taken.

TABLE 10.—Streets, Alleys, and Courts, in the Parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster.

	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
Number of streets, alleys, and courts, } which are thoroughfares }	120	95	215
Not thoroughfares	63	64	132
Total	188	159	347

TABLE 11.—Number of the Dwellings of the Families of the Working Classes visited.

	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
Single rooms for each family	1,601	2,251	3,852
Two „ „	417	636	1,053
Three „ „	38	118	156
Four „ „	5	47	52
Total number of dwellings visited	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 12.—Condition of the Dwellings of the Working Classes visited.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Number of dwellings well furnished	1,085	1,091	2,176
„ „ scantily furnished	908	1,275	2,183
„ „ ill furnished	48	674	722
„ „ not ascertained	20	12	32
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113
Number of dwellings dry	2,035	2,643	4,678
„ „ damp	20	256	276
„ „ not ascertained	6	153	159
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 13.—State of the Supply of Water in the Dwellings of the Working Classes visited.

Supply of Water.	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Plentiful	2,004	2,820	4,824
Scanty	53	49	102
Not ascertained	4	183	187
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113
Good	2,011	2,863	4,874
Bad	1	1	1
Not ascertained	49	189	238
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 14.—Average Dimensions of the Rooms in the Dwellings of the Families of the Working Classes visited.

Number of dwellings in which the average dimensions of the principal rooms occupied by the families are—	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
8 feet by 10	360	87	447
10 „ by 12	484	623	1,107
12 „ by 14	899	1,641	2,540
14 „ by 18	316	652	968
18 „ by 24 . . . . .	..	3	3
Not ascertained	2	46	48
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 15.—State of the Drains and Pipes in the Dwellings of the Working Classes visited.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
In good order	1,834	2,582	4,416
Out of order	143	148	291
Not ascertained	84	322	406
Total	2,061	3,052	5,113

TABLE 16.—State of the Privies belonging to the Families of the Working Classes visited.

	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Number of privies which are decent	710	701	1,411
„ „ „ not decent	235	340	575
Total number of privies	945	1,041	1,986
Number of families in which each family has one } privy	208	41	249
Two families have one privy	536	645	1,181
Three „ „	432	751	1,183
Four „ „	422	437	859
Five „ „	219	566	785
Six „ „	24	32	56
Seven „ „	45	21	66
Eight „ „	24	366	390
Nine „ „	19	9	28
Ten „ „	20	56	76
Eleven „ „	22	12	34
Twelve „ „	12	70	82
Thirteen „ „	39	..	39
Fifteen „ „	36	18	54
Sixteen „ „	16	132	148
Eighteen „ „	36	18	54
Twenty „ „ . . . . .	..	82	82
Total number of families	2,110	3,256	5,366

As a general average, there are two families to one privy in the houses visited in the parish of St. Margaret; three families to one privy in the houses visited in the parish of St. John; and nearly three families to one privy in the whole of the district examined by the agents.

TABLE 17.—Length of Time, which the principal Members of the Families of the Working Classes visited state that they have resided in their Dwellings.

Period.	St. Margaret.	St. John.	Total.
From 1 month to 6 months	604	1,230	1,834
„ 6 „ to 1 year	205	316	521
„ 1 year to 3 „	360	676	1,036
„ 3 „ to 6 „	602	399	991
„ 6 „ to 9 „	126	97	223
„ 9 „ to 12 „	60	48	108
„ 12 „ to 15 „	9	17	26
„ 15 „ to 20 „	4	18	22
„ 20 „ to 40 „	2	11	13
Not ascertained	138	454	592
Total	2,110	3,256	5,366

TABLE 18.—General Summary of Houses in the Parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster.

Description.	St. Marg.	St. John.	Total.
Private houses	1,447	2,011	3,458
Houses untenanted	86	105	191
Beer shops	19	21	40
Spirit shops and public houses	76	52	128
Dispensaries and asylums	6	2	8
Churches	2	1	3
Chapels	6	5	11
Alms-houses	24	12	36
Friendly Loan Societies	5	1	6
Institution, Literary and Scientific . . . . .	..	1	1
Schools observed	38	29	67
Surgeons and dentists	12	7	19
Chemists and druggists	17	15	32
Shops—clothing	186	113	299
„ food	261	172	433
„ furniture	64	24	88
„ tools, machines, and fittings	9	2	11
„ pawnbrokers	8	11	19
Other trades	351	303	654
Disorderly houses observed	50	28	78
Total number of houses included in the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster	2,667	2,915	5,582
Total number of houses visited, as inhabited by the working classes, in these two parishes	1,013	1,256	2,269
Number of houses not visited, as not inhabited by the working classes, in these two parishes	1,654	1,659	3,313
Total	2,667	2,915	5,582